

**Interreg  
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# **O.3.1 Regional Action Plan: Czech Republic**

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IREAS

## Versioning and Contribution History

Version	Date	Author/Editor/Contributor	Description/Comments
1		Jiří Louda (IREAS)	Draft of the Chapter 1 and Chapter 2
2		Josef Mulka (IREAS)	Measure 1 and Measure 2
3	30.12.2025	Martina Kubíková (IREAS)	Finalisation of the report

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. Strategic Background and Foundations of the Regional Action Plan .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. Visions for 2026-2030: Envisioning the Region in a Circular and Digital Future - Alignment with Transnational Strategy for WEs Circular Transition.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3. Regional Action Plan Measures.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4. Monitoring of the Regional Action Plan implementation .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>5. Recommendations for Enhancing Long-Term Impact .....</b>	<b>20</b>

## Abbreviations and glossary of terms

ASP	Associated Strategic Partner
CE	Circular Economy
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
NSHG	National Stakeholder Groups
RAP	Regional Action Plan
S3	Smart Specialisation Strategy
WE	Women Entrepreneurs

# Introduction

This Regional Action Plan (RAP) is developed within the framework of the WE.Circular project, an Interreg Danube Region Programme initiative aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs in the Danube Region by fostering their circular and digital transitions.

The WE.Circular project recognizes that Czech Republic faces unique challenges and opportunities in supporting women-led businesses in adopting circular economy principles and leveraging digital technologies. This RAP builds upon a foundation of thorough analysis and stakeholder engagement, ensuring its relevance and effectiveness for the region.

Specifically, this RAP leverages the findings of the following key activities within the WE.Circular project:

- **Activity 1.1: Transnational Skills Gaps and Needs Analysis:** This analysis, conducted across all partner countries, identified the specific skills gaps and needs of women entrepreneurs in the region regarding digital technologies, circular economy principles, and smart specialization strategies.
- **Activity 3.2: Analyzing of existing policy and legislative framework:** This activity mapped the existing policy and regulatory landscape at both the national and regional levels, identifying existing support mechanisms and potential barriers to the circular and digital transition of women-led businesses.
- **Recommendations from National Stakeholder Groups (NSHGs):** Throughout the project, the project team has consulted with a National Stakeholder Group comprised of CzechInvest, Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, INION, JIC and others with the aim to validate existing data and gather relevant feedback in key action areas.

The proposed actions in this RAP are designed to address the specific challenges identified through these activities and are tailored to the unique regional context. The implementation of this RAP aims to contribute to the broader objectives of the WE.Circular project, fostering a more inclusive and sustainable circular economy within the Danube Region.

# 1. Strategic Background and Foundations of the Regional Action Plan

Czechia, located in Central Europe, has a population density of 133.3 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> with a total population of 10,900,555, (women constituting 50.71%). In the entrepreneurial landscape, women are less likely to be self-employed or to run businesses compared to men. In 2020, 11% of employed women were self-employed, just above the OECD average, but significantly lower than the 19% of employed men. The entrepreneurial ecosystem is characterized by SMEs and self-employment, with women driving change across various sectors.

Based on the analysis conducted, **following recommendations for supporting women entrepreneurs in the Czech Republic**, particularly in relation to digital and circular transitions, were prepared:

- Encourage networking, coaching, and mentoring through incubators and associations to support women entrepreneurs.
- Develop banking products tailored to support women's businesses, ensuring better access to financial resources.
- Improve access to social security for self-employed women in precarious situations.
- Implement a comprehensive approach by mapping current policies related to gender issues, linking them, and harmonizing strategies.

The Czech Republic has implemented a comprehensive set of policies and legislative measures to support women's entrepreneurship and facilitate the transition to a circular economy. These initiatives align with broader EU directives and strategies aimed at promoting gender equality and sustainable development.

**National Action Plan for Gender Equality (2021-2030)** outlines various measures to enhance gender equality across different sectors, including entrepreneurship. The plan aims to improve women's access to financial resources through grants, low-interest loans, and micro-financing schemes. Financial institutions are encouraged to develop gender-sensitive lending practices. To support women entrepreneurs, the plan promotes mentorship programs connecting aspiring women entrepreneurs with



To address these needs and challenges, the following recommendations have emerged:

- Organize workshops and training programs to raise awareness and build capacity among women entrepreneurs in the circular economy.
- Create a platform for women entrepreneurs to connect, share experiences, and access resources.
- Improve access to finance for women-led circular economy businesses through micro-loan programs and financial training.

## 2. Vision for 2026-2030: Envisioning the Region in a Circular and Digital Future - Alignment with Transnational Strategy for WEs Circular Transition

This section of the Regional Action Plan is crucial for aligning regional efforts with the broader objectives of the WE.Circular project, as guided by the principles outlined in the Transnational Strategy to Accelerate Transition Towards a Circular Economy in the Danube Region. The strategy is designed to facilitate a collaborative and unified approach across the Danube region. The RAP is specifically structured to support the overarching goals of "The Danube Goes Circular" by:

- **Contributing to Resource Efficiency:** The measures outlined in this RAP are designed to contribute to increased resource efficiency within the region, supporting the broader transition to a circular economy in alignment with the Transnational Strategy. Through initiatives focused on empowering women-led enterprises, this RAP will help ensure that this sector is a key driver of these improvements.
- **Advancing Strategic Pillars:** The RAP includes specific measures designed to advance the following strategic pillars, all with a strong emphasis on supporting women entrepreneurs:
  - **Promoting Circular Business Models:** The RAP measures will foster the development and adoption of new, circular business models among women-led enterprises, ensuring sustainable practices are at the core of their operations.



- Enhancing Waste and Resource Management: RAP measures focus on improving waste and resource management practices within women-led businesses, promoting closed-loop systems and reducing environmental impact.
- Raising Awareness and Building Capacity: This RAP involves measures aimed at raising awareness and building capacity among women entrepreneurs regarding circular economy principles, digital transformation, and sustainable business practices.
- By implementing these measures, the RAP will contribute to greater coherence and synergy across the Danube region, ensuring that women entrepreneurs are at the forefront of the transition to a sustainable and circular economy by 2030.

### 3. Regional Action Plan Measures

### Measure 1: Increasing awareness and accessibility of innovation support for women entrepreneurs

**Pillars:** Measure 1 is contributing to the strategic pillars

- Circular economy transition,
- Digital transition

**Challenges, barriers and gaps:** Women entrepreneurs in the Czech Republic face persistent challenges in accessing innovation platforms that could support their business development, particularly in the context of digital transformation and the shift toward circular economy models. Despite the existence of various support structures—such as CzechInvest, regional Smart Accelerator initiatives, and innovation hubs—many women-led businesses remain disconnected from these resources.

One of the core issues is the lack of visibility and transparency in the innovation ecosystem. Information about available programs, mentoring opportunities, and networking events is often fragmented and difficult to navigate. This is especially problematic for women entrepreneurs operating in regional or rural areas, where institutional support may be less accessible and digital literacy levels vary.



## **Actions for Implementation of Measure 1**

### **1.1 Cooperation with NGOs and Existing Platforms**

This action focuses on establishing and strengthening partnerships with organizations that support women entrepreneurs across the Czech Republic. Key stakeholders—including BusinessInfo, CzechInvest, IREAS, M.arter, Women in Tech, regional innovation centres and other NGOs—bring valuable expertise, networks, and regional insights. Their involvement ensures that the measure is responsive to the diverse needs of women entrepreneurs and is inclusive regionally relevant. .

As part of this cooperation, regional innovation centres will be interviewed to gather input from all NUTS3 regions, helping tailor the signpost (regional platforms) to reflect local contexts and opportunities. BusinessInfo, M.arter and other stakeholders will help develop the signpost/information hub and promote it among women entrepreneurs, while also ensuring the long-term sustainability of the output. We are currently seeking additional partner institutions, and the exact list of participating organizations will be available by the end of the project

### **1.2 Development of the Online Signpost/Information hub)**

The central output of this measure will be a user-friendly online signpost that serves as a comprehensive repository of resources for women entrepreneurs in the Czech Republic.

#### **1.2.1. Mapping**

The signpost will map the innovation ecosystem and include:

- Support programs and funding schemes
- Mentoring and networking opportunities
- Educational and training offers
- National and Regional events, projects and initiatives
- Relevant institutions, NGOs, and platforms that support woman entrepreneurs

#### **1.2.2. Development**

BusinessInfo.cz will lead the development and maintenance of the signpost. Its content will be shaped by interviews with regional innovation centres across all NUTS3 regions to ensure regional diversity and relevance. IREAS will actively assist with the

The final version of the signpost is planned for completion by June 2026.

Rather than organizing a dedicated promotional event, the signpost will be promoted informally through the existing communication channels of participating stakeholders. These include newsletters, websites, social media, and regular events already organized by partners. Stakeholders such as CzechInvest, IREAS, Women in Tech, P-PINK, NGOs, regional innovation centres, and the Chamber of Commerce will actively share and promote the signpost. This decentralized and low-budget approach ensures cost-effectiveness while leveraging existing outreach mechanisms to maximize visibility and impact.

Action	Responsible Organization	Supportive Organizations	Time-frame	Budget	Impact
1.1 Cooperation with NGOs and platforms	IREAS	CzechInvest, P-PINK, Women in Tech, Regional Innovation Centres, NGOs	Sep 2025 – Jun 2026	3000 EUR	<p>Number of organizations involved</p> <p>Coverage of NUTS3 regions</p> <p>Quality and diversity of inputs for the signpost</p>



### **September – October 2025: Initiation and Stakeholder Engagement**

- Identify and confirm key stakeholders (IREAS, CzechInvest, P-PINK, Women in Tech, regional innovation centres, NGOs).
- Launch initial coordination meetings and define roles.
- Begin mapping existing resources and platforms relevant to women entrepreneurs.
- Prepare interview framework for regional innovation centres.

### **November – December 2025: Data Collection and Content Planning**

- Conduct interviews with regional innovation centres across NUTS3 regions.
- Collect data on regional programs, events, mentoring schemes, and educational opportunities.
- Design the structure and categories of the signpost (repository).
- Begin drafting initial content and resource listings.

### **January – February 2026: Technical Development and Content Integration**

- Start technical development of the online signpost platform (led by BusinessInfo.cz).
- Integrate collected data and resources into the platform.
- Ensure regional representation and inclusivity in content.
- Begin internal testing of the platform.

### **March – April 2026: Review, Feedback, and Pre-launch Promotion**

- Share beta version with stakeholders for feedback.
- Refine content and improve usability based on input.
- Prepare promotional materials for informal dissemination.
- Initiate soft promotion via newsletters, websites, and social media of partner organizations.

### **May – June/July 2026: Finalization and Public Launch**

- Finalize and officially launch the online signpost.
- Continue informal promotion through stakeholder networks.
- Monitor initial usage and collect user feedback.
- Prepare sustainability plan for ongoing updates and maintenance.

## **Measure 2: Strengthening the capacity for long-term support of women entrepreneurs through project-based initiatives**

Pillars: Measure 2 contributes to the strategic pillars

- Circular economy transition
- Digital transition
- Social inclusion and gender equality

### **Challenges, barriers and gaps:**

To ensure long-term and sustainable support for women entrepreneurs in the Czech Republic, this measure focuses on building the institutional and strategic capacity to develop and implement project-based initiatives aligned with national and EU funding opportunities. Drawing on the experience from the WE.Circular project, the measure aims to prepare scalable and fundable project concepts that address gender-specific barriers in the circular and digital economy. While the preparation of an ESF-funded project is one of the key actions, the measure itself is not dependent on the approval of any single funding application. Instead, it emphasizes readiness, stakeholder engagement, and the development of adaptable project frameworks that can be used across multiple funding calls and contexts

Although several initiatives have emerged to support women entrepreneurs in the Czech Republic, long-term and sustainable funding remains a challenge—especially for regionally active NGOs and platforms. Many women-led businesses still lack access to tailored support that addresses both gender-specific barriers and the demands of circular and digital transitions.

Building on the experience and networks developed through the WE.Circular project, IREAS is well-positioned to prepare and submit a comprehensive project proposal to the European Social Fund (ESF) - Operational Programme Employment Plus 2021–2027 – call number: 03\_25\_088 - Strengthening the competencies of women disadvantaged in the labor market and in entrepreneurship. However, the process of preparing such a project requires coordination, stakeholder engagement, and strategic planning to ensure relevance, feasibility, and impact.

A key gap is the absence of a structured mechanism to translate insights from WE.Circular into a scalable, fundable initiative. Without dedicated preparation, valuable

This measure aims to bridge that gap by preparing a high-quality ESF project proposal focused on empowering women entrepreneurs through training, mentoring, and access to innovation ecosystems. The proposal will be submitted in May 2026, the expected start of the project is the end of the year 2026.

**Target group:** 50 women entrepreneurs

The project will focus on providing one-year support for women entrepreneurs through:

- Policy alignment of the Measure:**

It also builds directly on the outcomes of the WE.Circular project, ensuring continuity and sustainability of its impact. By leveraging existing networks and knowledge, the measure contributes to the development of a gender-responsive innovation ecosystem in the Czech Republic.



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Action	Responsible Organization	Supportive Organizations	Time-frame	Budget	Impact
2.1 Strategic Planning and Stakeholder Engagement	IREAS	<i>Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Circular Academy, CzechInvest, BusinessInfo.cz.</i>	Sep 2025 – Feb 2026	Non-profit / in-kind	Number of stakeholders involved; Quality of project concept; Relevance to ESF priorities
2.2 Drafting of ESF Project Proposal	IREAS	<i>Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Circular Academy</i>	Dec 25 – Feb 2026	Non-profit / in-kind	Completed project proposal; Alignment with ESF requirements; Inclusion of gender-responsive elements
2.3 Submission of ESF Project Proposal	IREAS	—	May 2026	Non-profit / in-kind	Successful submission; Eligibility for ESF funding; Continuity of WE.Circular outcomes
2.4 Preparation for Implementation Phase	IREAS	<i>Partner organizations</i>	Oct 2026 – onward	ESF-funded	Readiness for project launch; Defined roles and responsibilities; Implementation plan

Implementation of the Task for the Specified Time-frame (Oct 2025 – Jun/Jul 2026):

#### September 2025 – February 2026: Strategic Planning and Engagement

- Identify key partners and stakeholders for the ESF project.
- Organize initial planning meetings to define project scope and objectives.
- Review outcomes and lessons learned from WE.Circular.

#### December 2025 – February 2026: Concept Development

- Develop a preliminary concept note for the ESF project.
- Align project goals with ESF+ priorities and national strategies.
- Collect input from regional actors and women entrepreneurs.

### **March – May 2026: Proposal Drafting**

- Collaborate with external consultants to draft the full ESF proposal.
- Ensure inclusion of gender equality, circular economy, and digital transition components.
- Finalize budget, activities, and impact indicators.

### **May 2026: Submission**

- Submit the ESF project proposal through the appropriate channels.
- Confirm receipt and begin preparations for implementation.

### **October 2026 onward: Implementation Preparation**

- Develop detailed implementation plan.
- Assign roles and responsibilities to partner organizations.
- Prepare for project launch pending ESF approval.

## 4. Monitoring of the Regional Action Plan implementation

### Measure 1: Increasing awareness and accessibility of innovation support for women entrepreneurs

- **KPIs linked to the actions:**
  - Number of organizations involved in cooperation (Action 1.1)
  - Number and diversity of resources listed in the online signpost (Action 1.2)
  - Number of stakeholders actively promoting the signpost (Action 1.3)
  - Website traffic and user feedback (e.g. survey results)
- **Frequency of monitoring:** Every 6 months (interim review in March 2026, final review in July 2026)
- **Tools to be used for monitoring:**
  - Web analytics (e.g. traffic, click-through rates)
  - Internal progress reports from IREAS and BusinessInfo.cz

### Measure 2: Strengthening the capacity for long-term support of women entrepreneurs through project-based initiatives

- **KPIs linked to the actions:**
  - Number of stakeholders engaged in planning (Action 2.1)
  - Completion of the ESF+ project proposal (Action 2.2)
  - Timely submission of the proposal (Action 2.3)
  - Readiness for implementation (Action 2.4)
  - Quality and relevance of the proposal (based on internal and external feedback)
- **Frequency of monitoring:**  
Quarterly (every 3 months), with key milestones in March, May, and July 2026
- **Responsible for monitoring:**  
IREAS (project lead), supported by external consultants and selected stakeholders

